

Addressing Symptoms and Perpetuating Reality

THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS OF MADHYA PRADESH



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Addressing Symptoms and Perpetuating Reality

THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS OF MADHYA PRADESH

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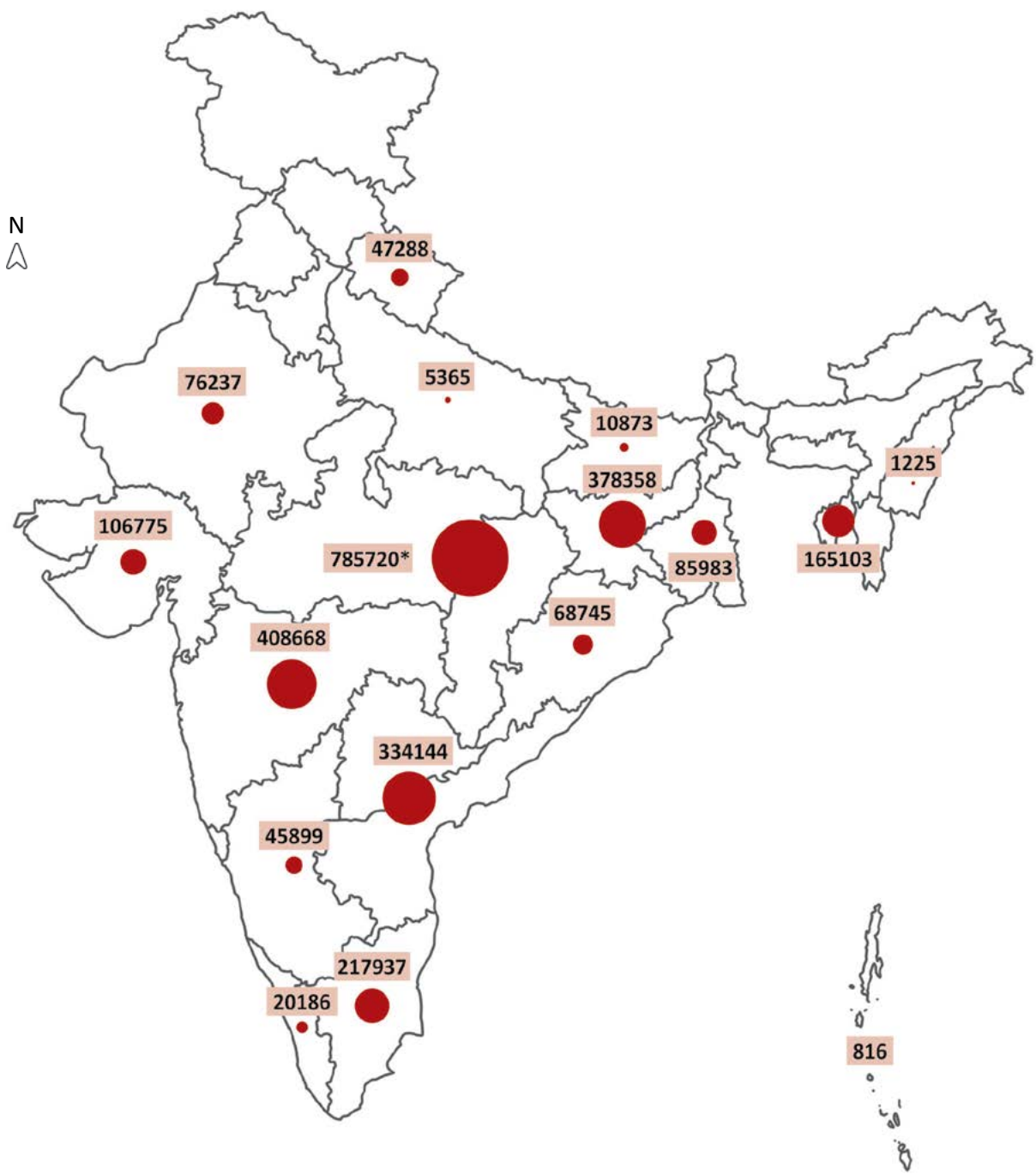
Executive Summary

Remoteness and Forest dwelling, pre-agricultural livelihoods; subsistence economy and a stagnant if not falling population were the four parameters used by the National Advisory Council (NAC) to classify specific ethnic groups into a category named “Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups”(PVTGs). Of the about 29 lakh persons of the 75 PVTGs; roughly 10 lakh persons of 3 PVTGs live in MP. Following the recommendations of the NAC, the Government of India devised Conservation Cum Development (CCD) plans as an instrument to support efforts to positively transform their living conditions while enabling them to preserve their cultural integrity. The people of the PVTGs live in remote locations. In MP they are scattered over a wide area, live surrounded by dominant communities and tend to be swamped in that environment. In that respect, their case is not unlike other disenfranchised groups such as nomadic tribes or persons with disability in whose cases too small numbers combine with geographic scatter. Lacking physical and social access to development administration; suffering from poor navigation and political skills, they are unable to counter the strong influence of the dominant communities on the process of development. The State machinery for implementation of the CCD is thinly manned and has a limited facility for reaching

out to the people of the PVTGs. Most of the CCD funds are used for creation of physical infrastructure. Outcomes of the efforts for their well-being including the outcomes of the CCD have not been remarkable. They suffer endemic vulnerabilities in their livelihoods, regarding their food security and their transactions with the dominant communities.

Underdevelopment of the PVTGs is a resultant of the social process of domination and differential power to influence outcomes of administrative action of the State. It is suggested that future approach to promoting the wellbeing of the PVTGs should ride on a technology-enabled platform. Funds allotted under CCD should be treated as additional to normal State schemes. Use of these funds for the creation of infrastructure should be strongly discouraged. To overcome the inherent challenges of the administrative digital technology that identifies each PVTGs family and traces its progression in life would be the most effective strategy. For this to come about, appropriate measures for collecting and digitally storing information and a staff that can effectively use this system would be called for.

Spread of PVTGs across India



*The number represents the population of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh combined.
The numbers represent the population of PVTGs in the respective states in absolute figures, based on the 2001 Population Census.
Data Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, <https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/NACRecommendationsforPVTGs.pdf>

1. Introduction

In numerous remote parts of the world scarcely touched by the march of modern civilisation, small communities live a primordial existence isolated from the mass of humanity inhabiting this globe. In an uncomfortably large number of instances and places, the pallbearers of modernity have tended to and on occasions continue to simply exterminate them in their greed for the increasingly scarce resources in locales of these communities. Elsewhere as in Australia, they were denied their human status till mid-sixties and treated like flora and fauna to be exploited by those who thought they were human. In less extreme cases, they may get formal citizenship rights and privileges but lacking the intellectual - cultural capital on which to build individual personalities or skills to transact and navigate in the modern world; they continue to remain hopelessly behind the dominant communities on all parameters of human development.

The nomenclature “Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups” refers to such people in India. The National Advisory Council (NAC) of the Chairperson of the UPA, applied four features taken together; pre-agricultural mode of living, forest dwellings, stagnant or falling populations and a subsistence economy to classify a tribal group as particularly vulnerable.

75 such groups exist across the country comprising just about a fourth of a percent of the total population. These 29 lakh people get completely swamped in the population of the people classified as Scheduled Tribes (ST) which account for over 11 crore people (8.6% of the population). Since the people belonging to ST themselves are considered needing special assistance, the condition of the PVTGs can easily be imagined.

Three tribal groups Bhariyas (81932), Sahariyas (626543) and Baigas (291629) are classified as PVTGs in the state of Madhya Pradesh. They together number some 10 lakhs and live scattered in 5372 villages in 27 districts of the state. It would appear that the population at least of Sahariya is neither really falling nor stagnant though there is little doubt about their vulnerability. Of the 5372 villages roughly 2300 have been notified for intervention by the government.



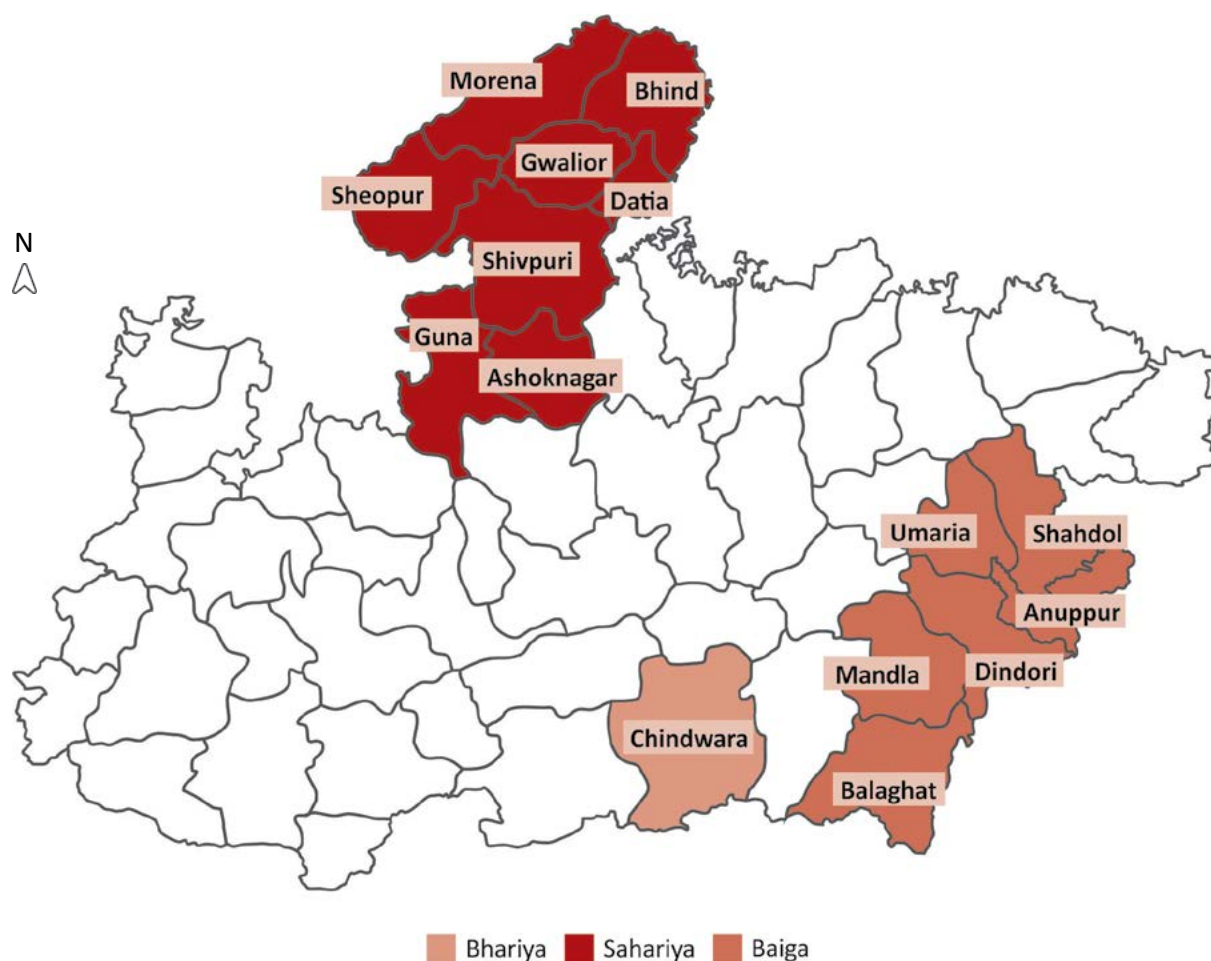
State-wise list of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

Name of States/Union Territory	S.No	Name of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal
Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana)	1	Chenchu
	2	Bodo Gadaba
	3	Gutob Gadaba
	4	Dongaria Khond
	5	Kutia Kondha
	6	Kolam
	7	Konda Reddi
	8	Kondasavara
	9	Bondo Porja
	10	Khond Porja
	11	Parengi Porja
	12	Tothi
Bihar (including Jharkhand)	13	Asur
	14	Birhor
	15	Birjia
	16	Hill Kharia
	17	Korwa
	18	Mal Paharia
	19	Parhaiya
	20	Sauria Paharia
	21	Savara
Gujarat	22	Kolgha
	23	Kathodi
	24	Kotwalia
	25	Padhar
	26	Siddi
Karnataka	27	Jenu Kuruba
	28	Koraga
Kerala	29	Cholanaikayan
	30	Kadar
	31	Kattunayakan
	32	Koraga
	33	Kurumbas
Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh)	34	Abujh Maria
	35	Baiga
	36	Bharia
	37	Birhor
	38	Hill Korba
	39	Kamar
	40	Sahariya

Name of States/Union Territory	S.No	Name of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal
Maharashtra	41	Katkaria /kathodi
	42	Kolam
	43	Maria Gond
Manipur	44	Maram Naga
Odisha	45	Chukutia Bhunjia
	46	Birhore
	47	Bondo
	48	Didayi
	49	Dongaria Khond
	50	Juang
	51	Kharia
	52	Kutia Kondha
	53	Lanjia Saura
	54	Lodha
	55	Mankirdia
	56	Paudi Bhuiya
	57	Saura
Rajasthan	58	Saharia
Tamil Nadu	59	Irular
	60	Kattunayakan
	61	Kota
	62	Korumba
	63	Paniyan
Tripura	64	Toda
	65	Raing
Uttar Pradesh (including Uttarakhand)	66	Buksa
	67	Raji
West Bengal	68	Birhor
	69	Lodha
	70	Totos
Andaman & Nicobar Island	71	Great Andamanies
	72	Jarawa
	73	Onge
	74	Sentinelese
	75	Shom Pen

Data Source : Ministry of Tribal Affairs, <https://tribal.nic.in/DivisionsFiles/SwLPVVTGs.pdf>

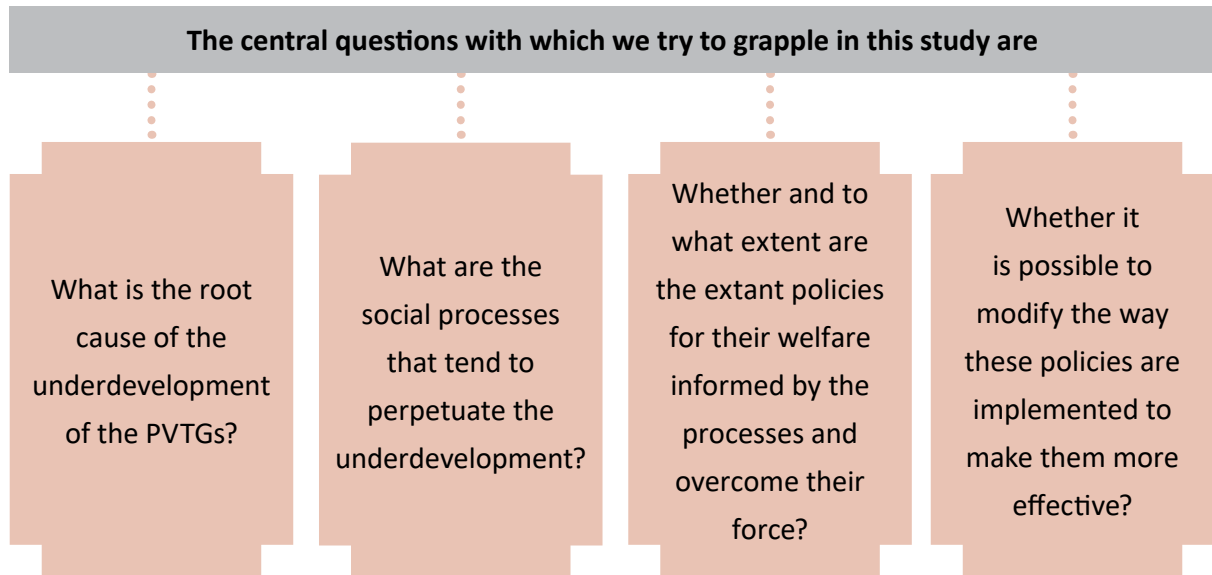
Districts with notified Baiga, Sahariya and Bhariya population in Madhya Pradesh



	Bhariya	Sahariya	Baiga
Number of Districts	1	8	6
Notified Villages	12	1159	1143
Population in the notified villages	2012	417171	131425

Data Source : Department of Tribal Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh

This note based on the study explores the troubling situation of continued extreme vulnerability of the PVTGs and the broad developmental process that causes perpetuation of the vulnerability. The study draws from the work done by the team of authors of the note on PVTGs of Madhya Pradesh but does not purport to be a summary of the report on the subject made for the Government of Madhya Pradesh. The development issues about the PVTGs in MP are treated more as an illustration.

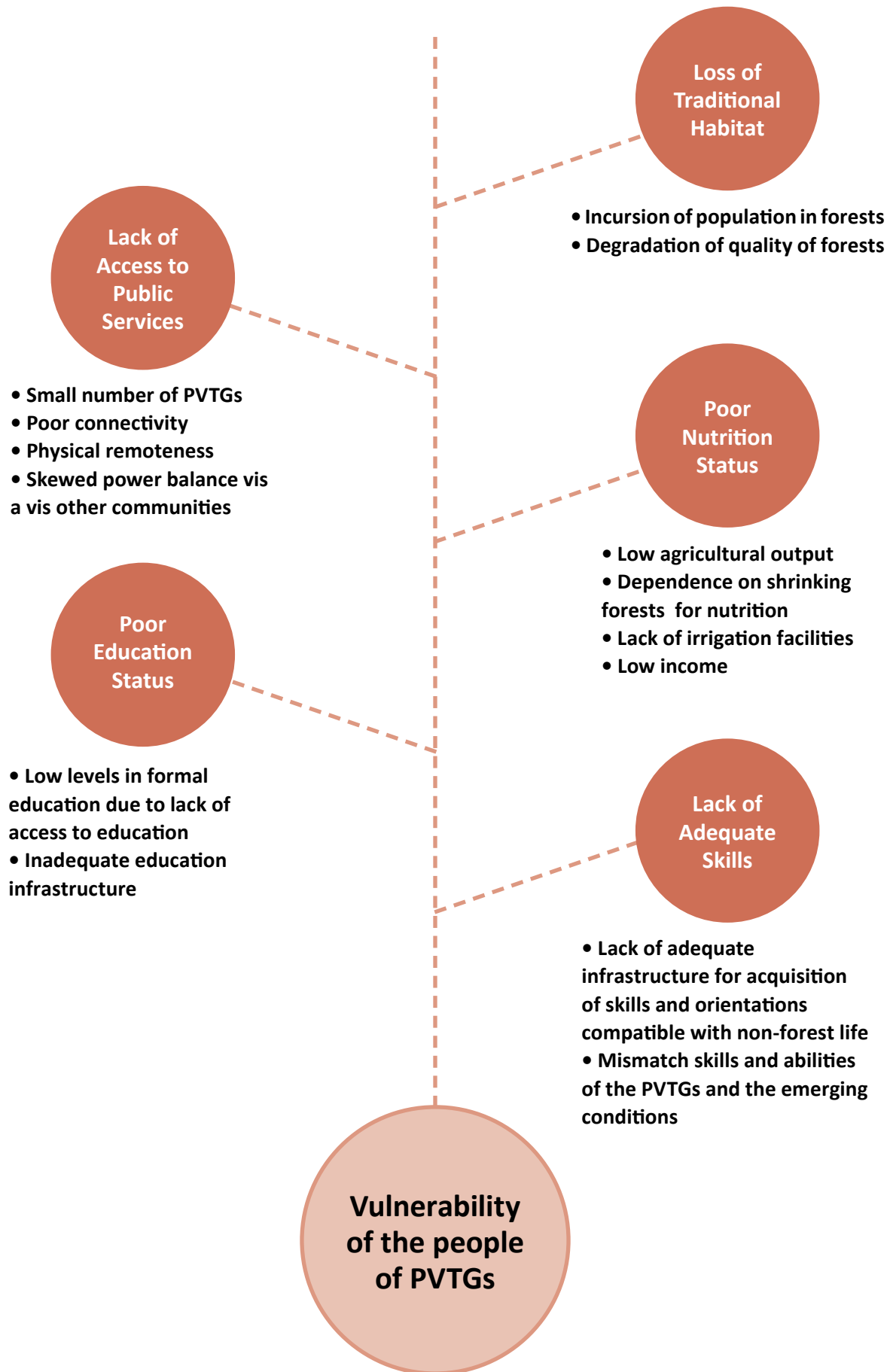


Overall in India, a specific provision of roughly Rs. 670 per capita has been made as development assistance to the PVTGs. These provisions are made under a scheme called Conversation Cum Development (CCD) plan. This amount is on top of the sum provided for the welfare of the people of the ST. In Madhya Pradesh, this extra sum is larger; of the order of Rs. 1000 per head of the PVTGs population.

Based on field research undertaken in Madhya Pradesh an attempt is made here to

- Situate the problems of the PVTGs in a social and geophysical context
- Present the current situation of the PVTGs on parameters of human development
- Attempt to construct a problem tree for the situation of the PVTGs
- Look at the CCD plans as adopted in MP in the light of the above analysis and assessment

We next briefly explain the administrative arrangements about the development interventions to bring up the PVTGs. A conceptual framework for critically examining the situation is then discussed. We then sum up the current status of development outcomes for the PVTGs. Subsequently we explore the controversial issue regarding potential hiatus between conservation and development. Finally, we present our recommendations for further ameliorating the situation of PVTGs. The note ends by assessing the feasibility of an approach that addresses causes rather than symptoms of vulnerability. The rest of the note is devoted to summing up our assessment of the development process causing the perpetuation of vulnerability and our tentative suggestions for ending it.



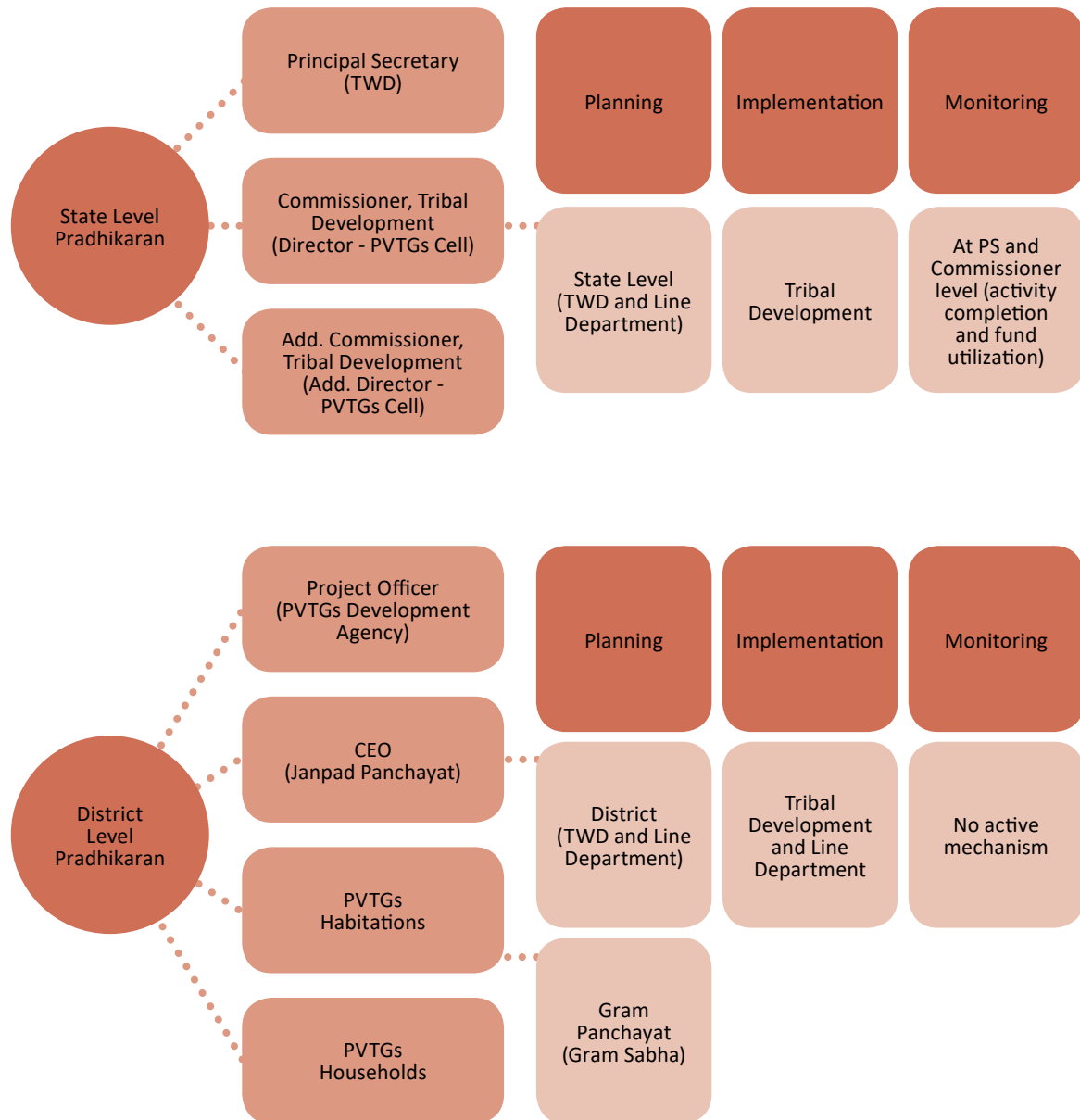
2. Design of the Conservation Cum Development (CCD) Plan

While the earlier nomenclature for these people was “primitive tribal groups” and they were offered some targeted development attention; from 2013 more concerted efforts came about. Following the NAC report, the Government of India has mounted “Conservation Cum Development (CCD)” plans as a specific mechanism to improve the conditions of the PVTGs. The Central Government makes specific fund transfers to the States against CCD plans submitted by them.

CCD Plans are to be evolved entirely by the State Governments based on their perception of the development concerns of the PVTGs and their proposed solutions to address them. Central Government fully funds CCDs. This volume is funded based on the plans under the CCD scheme received from the States. A degree of uncertainty is often reported regarding the volume of funds which the Central Government may release to States under any programme. This uncertainty stems from the budgetary provisions fund availability at the Centre. There is, therefore, a degree of iteration: an informal word comes about how much will be available to a State in the current year; a plan is accordingly put together and then the final amount is arrived at depending upon what is made available to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs of the Central Government. At times these amounts may even be larger than the initial number suggested, and hence a portfolio of schemes and end uses may have to be put together quickly to claim the extra allocation.

Administratively the CCD Plans consider as their targets the people living in the notified villages mentioned above. These villages were enumerated in the 15 districts based on a survey that was conducted in 2004. The CCD excludes people belonging to these tribal formations but living outside the notified villages. In Madhya Pradesh, these CCDs are anchored in 11 “*Abhikarans*” or Agencies which are housed in the district development administration. Depending upon the specific population and its geographic scatter, some of the *Abhikarans* reach out to more than one district while some work in a single district. The Heads of the *Abhikarans* report to the office of the Commissioner of Tribal Development who in turn reports to the Principal Secretary charged with this subject. *Abhikarans* do not have their implementation machinery but administer the schemes under the CCD through other line departments of the Government of MP. These diverse departments and agencies have their schemes designed by them by their understanding and perception of technical issues involved and the implementation protocols appropriate to them.

Operational mechanism of the CCD Plan in MP



3. A conceptual framework to set the context

The remoteness of the habitation, scattered habitations; very small numbers leading to a situation of being completely overshadowed and dominated by a larger community, resource paucity or abundance and agro-climatic conditions of the locale and habitations all tend to influence the degree of vulnerability of a particular community. Thus high caste medium farmers having irrigated lands in the command area of a major river irrigation project staying close to a national highway in Surat district are likely to be far less vulnerable than landless Dalit farmers living in a village dominated by high caste Patel families in the hinterlands of the drought-prone Saurashtra region. Each of these factors is considered below before offering a conceptual framework.

Resource abundance or scarcity

Ester Boserup has given a neat characterisation of the evolution of agricultural (and hence consequent life pattern) development under growing population pressure in any region.

At the start, agriculture is practiced with limited inputs on “forest fallows”; when crops are grown in natural or human-made clearings in dense forests.

The next step comes as “bush fallow” where agriculture is practiced on lands obtained by clearing bush forests.

The third stage is “short fallows” which in our Indian parlance is the *Jhoom* practice.

Then we have annual cropping and finally multiple cropping with zero fallow; as is now

seen in most parts of India.

NAC uses “pre-agricultural existence” of a community as a characterising feature for its inclusion in PVTGs. Implicit in it is their dependence on the resource conditions when the mores of the community evolved. It can be hypothesised that all PVTGs people lived in



Dependence on forest resources for day to day activities, a Baiga woman in Mandla district

not too distant past in conditions of abundant land resources. The trouble is they had only usufructuary access but not complete property rights over these forest lands.

This inference ties up with the second feature of forest dwellings. It may be noted that what happened in many locales of PVTGs was deforestation (caused whether by clear felling by the State agencies for timber without effective protected reforestation or creeping deforestation due to the incursion of human habitations on the periphery).

In quite a few states like Jharkhand, other communities more developed than the PVTGs settled in the “territory” of the PVTGs. As a combined result of these two features, the land abundance has and will continue to be under threat. Such is at least the situation in MP. As a result, the primordial pre-agricultural,

hunting-gathering modes of living has become more and more inadequate to support the people; resulting in greater food and nutrition stress.

Agro-climatic conditions

Within MP itself, the Eastern plains and hilly regions inhabited by Baigas are richly endowed with abundant rains, consequent near perennial streams; semi-evergreen forests and a general bounty of nature. On the other hand, the regions in North Western MP inhabited by Sahariyas are dry and drought-prone; putting heavy and periodic stress on an already threatened livelihoods system. The native habitations of Bhariyas in South differ from both these regions. Soil type, quality, and fertility along with crop mixes in vogue also differ among the three regions.



Farm pond dug by a Sahariya farmer



Scattered habitations

Remoteness

All habitations of MP's PVTGs (as of their counterparts in other parts of the country) are remote with very little urbanisation, scant road network, and connectivity regarding electricity or telephony.

Scattered and sparse habitations

The number of people in PVTGs is about 3% of the entire ST population. Were they all living together in one compact cluster, then it is possible that their situation would have

been different for two reasons. On the one hand, togetherness would have facilitated the building of solidarity. On the other, their location in a compact terrain would have enabled provision of services required and meant for them with a high degree of fidelity. However, these 29 lakh persons of PVTGs in India are scattered all over the country. Even the 10 lakh persons belonging to PVTGs in Madhya Pradesh are spread over more than a dozen districts. In virtually none of the districts, their population is so significant as to require and smoothly enable the local administration to focus on them. The final factor discussed below creates additional difficulties.



Remote Sahariya hamlet in Shivpuri district



Social gathering in Limador village, Dindori district

Lost in a dominant community

Social scientists have noted the manner in which dominant communities in any geographic locale acquire a firm grip on the way public resources are allocated and used in that locale. Numerical strength, control on important economic resources and ready access to the State's administrative machinery allow the dominant community to acquire a nearly unbreakable stranglehold on resource allocation and application processes. In the case of PVTGs, the nature of such dominant communities living in their proximity and hence the nature of this stranglehold differs in different parts of the MP.

- A numerically strong tribal formation of Gonds surrounds the Baigas in rural hinterlands of the Eastern MP hills.
- The Sahariyas live in proximity of Ahirs, Gujars, and other non-tribal communities with far stronger control on resources and access and links with the administration.
- The Bhariyas live in a mixed population of Yadavs, Korkus, and Gonds.

The State is indeed concerned with the conditions in which the PVTGs live. The State wishes to impact their quality of life positively. The State has intended to make serious attempts to initiate action to rectify the conditions and to improve the development parameters as they relate to

the PVTGs. Such action has to be mounted through the administrative structures of the State and navigated through the social conditions and ground realities as they exist. These, in turn, are affected by the five factors described above. The impact on the life parameters is a resultant of the complex dynamics of implementation of the state policies and the ground reality.

As a hypothesis, it is suggested that outcome regarding improvement in life parameters are likely to be superior if

- **The communities are physically more accessible**
- **The people are located in a concentrated manner in any area**
- **Their agro-climatic conditions are conducive and with moderate risks**
- **The dominant community around them itself is also tribal**

On the other hand, PVTGs scattered in a large number of villages in regions of high weather stress, each village of which set is dominated by non-tribal communities will perhaps show stagnant if not worsening parameters.

4. Current situation of the people from the PVTGs in MP

Aside from the State and Central officers charged with the responsibility of enhancing the welfare of the tribal people including the PVTGs; attention to the living conditions, social structure, and practices as well as the cultural life of the PVTGs has also come from the academic community.

It may be noted that by very definition, people of the PVTGs are expected to be forest dwellers practicing primitive agriculture and living in pre-agricultural conditions. Dense forests are needed for their traditional life pattern to be harmonious with nature.

Unfortunately, the districts of residence of Sahariyas do not show such forests at all. The forests in those districts (Guna, Bhind, Shivpuri, Gwalior, Sheopur) have been reduced to open forests if not scrub forests. The proportion of dense forests in these districts is now below 10% of their total forest area! This deterioration in the quality of forests has resulted in now rendering Sahariyas sort of out of place in their homeland.

The situation of Baigas who live in South-Eastern parts of the state is perhaps a shade better as the districts of Mandla, Dindori, Balaghat, Anuppur, Shahdol, etc. still show where dense forests still exist.

Bhariyas, whose notified area is in Chhindwara district live in a forest area where the dense forests form about 25% of total forest area. (All figures pertain to 2011, source, Forest Survey Report, FSI, Dehradun).

ONE WOULD, THEREFORE, EXPECT THE TRADITIONAL LIFE PATTERN OF THE SAHARIYAS TO BE UNDER GREATEST STRESS.

When compared with other tribal people and certainly with rest of the state, the situation of the people from PVTGs is quite bad. This comparison has been made between districts of the significant PVTGs population and the State on some parameters indicating the state of health, education,

Spread of PVTGs in Madhya Pradesh

S. No.	PVTGs	Notified Villages		Non Notified Villages	
		Villages	Population	Villages	Population
A	Sahariya				
1	Sheopur	297	86853	90	30915
2	Shivpuri	558	127120	151	32546
3	Bhind	7	3180	0	0
4	Morena	22	6948	16	2073
5	Gwalior	80	39922	115	16242
6	Guna	167	144444	234	27633
7	Ashoknagar	18	5738	416	61189
8	Datiya	10	2966	43	3627
9	Raisen	0	0	25	1331
10	Vidisha	0	0	347	31699
11	Panna	0	0	21	2117
	Total	1159	417171	1458	209372
B	Baiga				
1	Mandla	249	23509	98	7799
2	Balaghat	191	13957	53	3580
3	Dindori	217	21239	279	26412
4	Shahdol	173	30089	243	39080
5	Umariya	248	37600	91	20419
6	Anuppur	65	5031	170	24665
7	Satna	0	0	2	41
8	Jabalpur	0	0	64	9304
9	Katni	0	0	14	628
10	Sidhi	0	0	191	28276
	Total	1143	131425	1206	160204
C	Bhariya				
1	Chhindwara	12	2012	145	29795
2	Dindori	0	0	38	3989
3	Shahdol	0	0	17	1347
4	Panna	0	0	160	34888
5	Satna	0	0	28	5016
6	Narsingpur	0	0	6	4885
	Total	12	2012	394	79920

Data Source : Department of Tribal Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh



Villages without roads, Umaria district

income, and well-being of the people. The situation of the PVTGs of the districts is worse than that of the general district population. This comparison is presented in Table 2.

It appears from the table that districts, where Baigas live, are generally worse off on most parameters than the State and the National average while districts, where the Sahariyas live, are better off than the State average. However, the latter statement can be easily misconstrued as implying that Sahariyas are better off among the PVTGs. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In fact, this only tends to emphasise that conditions of the Sahariyas contrast much more sharply against their better off and socially more powerful non-tribal neighbors.

Scholarly writing on Sahariyas notes male adult literacy to be 28% and female adult literacy at 18%. The proportion of stunting and wasting among children of the Sahariyas ranged between 48-64% and 18-25% respectively in 2009. Some of the areas of concentrated Sahariya population; such as Kishenganj in Baran district (just across the Parvati river is Guna) have tended to report

Table 2: Comparison on indicators

Comparison of development parameters indicators	Income - % ST Households with monthly income of highest earning household member Less than Rs. 5000 per month	Nutrition - % of children Aged 0-59 months under- weight	IMR	USMR (Rural- Total)	Quality of Education- % children (Std. III-V) who CAN READ a Std. I level text)	Sex Ratio of total population	Households with improved drinking water source
India	9.5	36	34	61	Std. V: 19 Std. III: 17	991	90
MP	23	43	147	82	44	948	84
Sahariya districts	Sheopur	24	71	98	28	945	93
	Morena	1	60	79	40	895	92
	Bhind	0.5	53	67	36	855	93
	Gwalior	7	49	66	27	887	97
	Shivpuri	14	70	101	33	910	66
	Guna	15	77	95	25	1011	83
	Ashok Nagar	10	NA*	NA*	25	889	92
	Datia	2	73	95	34	893	92
	Mandla	58	70	87	40	1053	63
	Balaghat	22	62	73	40	1067	76
Baiga districts	Dindori	59	70	100	31	1004	71
	Shahdol	48	73	88	40	973	67
	Umaria	41	64	107	42	1006	69
	Anuppur	47	NA*	NA*	40	996	69
Bhariya district	Chhindwara	39	70	81	36	950	82

* - This district was a part of Guna district at the time of survey

SECC Data accessed from <http://secc.gov.in/districtCategorywiseIncomeSlabReport>
 National Family Health Survey 4th Round District factsheets
 Annual Health Survey Bulletin 2011-12, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India
 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2016, facilitated by Pratham
 Niti Aayog



Conversation with Sahariya tribals

starvation deaths time and again; each time strongly rejected by the State.

On all parameters of health and wellbeing, Sahariyas present a picture of pathos and stand out as a shame on an insensitive society in which their sad state appears to be unending. Unable to live in their habitat due to livelihoods stress, Sahariyas are reduced to a state of serfdom and often work as hapless workers in conditions of near bondage in stone quarries and similar lines. They perhaps face the greatest vulnerabilities because there has been a very sharp erosion of their “native” resource base and there are very strong oppressive communities surrounding them.

In general, when compared with general population protein-energy malnutrition as well as micro-nutrient deficiencies among the PVTGs are of a much higher order. The life expectancy among them is lower, in fact in Sahariyas villages which we visited there is hardly any senior citizen! Learning levels among their children are much lower. Their

exposure levels, as well as functional reach in layers of administration, are abysmally lower reinforcing their “remoteness”. Their participation in formal and secure employment is much less. Finally, their current state of poor well-being and disorientation in the changing world coupled with the paternalistic stance of the state has created a strong dependency syndrome among them.

The habitations of the PVTGs (i.e., the Notified Villages) do receive the development assistance offered by the State in the normal course of the State programmes. The people and these villages also receive specific assistance under the CCD.

5. Experience of Implementation of the Conservation Cum Development (CCD) Plan

As of now, installation of handpumps and village drinking water systems with over-head tanks, construction of buildings for schools, Anganwadi or community centers, bridges, and roads are included in the list of activities and schemes in the CCD. Revenue expenditure under schemes of Health or Women and Child development department is also a part of the CCD. There are also several direct cash transfer schemes such as scholarships; food support and emergency medical relief to the needy people of the PVTGs. Such direct transfers are meant for the families identified in the mandated villages during the above survey. Each of these is given through a set protocol of due diligence. Inherent to the title “Conservation cum Development” (CCD) for the welfare of the PVTGs is the intention to “conserve these groups” and to enable them to conserve their unique ways of life is explicit. Thus CCD include components for promotion and conservation of arts and cultural artifacts and practices of the people of the PVTGs.

However, Implementation Agencies or *Abhikarans* are equipped with limited workforce and less support for field level interaction for designing or implementing programmes. The paucity of staff and support facilities for engaging the people of the PVTGs lead to a situation in which it would appear that the approach to the implementation of the CCD is driven more by the need to achieve financial targets with limited emphasis on follow up and assessment of the effectiveness of impacts.

Funds are treated as utilised when they are transferred to line departments. Line departments tend to implement and assess their performance regarding technical parameters as appropriate to their respective schemes and not regarding their effective reach or utilisation by the vulnerable people of the PVTGs. The hardware of these schemes is as useful at the hands of the neighbouring communities as at the hands of the PVTGs a recognition which does not escape the former.

Given that the administrative protocols comprise of rules and provisions for whole categories of people with special considerations, wherever warranted, and that the dominant communities have a much greater influence on the administrative machinery than the people of the PVTGs, even schemes that directly benefit the PVTGs may not reach them effectively. For instance, the Government rules provide for direct recruitment of the people of the PVTGs without any screening

or testing procedure if the candidates have passed the Higher School Secondary Certificate (HSSC).

Although there are many graduates among the PVTGs in addition to dozens of young people who have cleared the HSSC, recruitment eludes them. This happens since such recruitment would reduce the vacancies available for ST category and other more influential ST communities have better reach in the administration. Location and sites as of schemes such as hand pumps or school buildings can be influenced and sheer social power imbalance can discourage access for the people of the PVTGs.

All such consequences are results of the “normal” or usual interaction between the rule and procedures bound but stretched administration and a society with skewed power distribution.

6. Understanding the underlying phenomenon

The current state of significant backwardness/underdevelopment of the people from PVTGs; as suggested by lower life expectancy, very poor representation in formal employment sectors, poor educational achievements, etc. can be traced to a set of a few factors. It is argued that the traditional habitations of the PVTGs were dense forests; naturally remotely located from poles of modern development. It is popularly believed that so long as the forest resource existed undisturbed, the hunting-gathering mode of existence produced life pattern outcomes satisfactory to the people of the PVTGs and did not pose secularly lasting distress. However with the incursion of the population in the dense forests and with progressive deterioration in the quality of forests as indicated by increasing proportion of open and scrub forests, the resources which sustained the PVTGs diminished. Acquisition of skills and orientations compatible with non-forest life takes much longer and is an inter-generational phenomenon. Thus a hiatus arose between the skills and abilities of the people of the PVTGs and the actual conditions surrounding them. Physical remoteness, social disabilities, relative powerlessness and poor connectivity, prevented any compensatory public assistance from effectively reaching them. Their small numbers and skewed power balance vis a vis the dominant community surrounding them prevents them from any viable pressure group activity of getting the public services they need. Thus the PVTGs face increasing vulnerability: vulnerability to a declining and unreliable nature of their resource, to the vagaries and power of the dominant community, to the risks and difficulties arising from an unfamiliar world of modern commerce and to the well-meaning but ineffectual public service delivery apparatus.

The key causal factors for under development of PVTGs are

- **Small numbers and hence getting swamped in a much larger social formation of “others”**
- **Scattered habitations and hence inability to mobilize**
- **Social and occupational infirmities due to poor exposure, education and negotiating power and**
- **Loss of habitat and erosion of resource base in traditional locations**

Using these four causal factors, we may reconstruct the pathway of underdevelopment as follows:

- The eroding resource base and consequent livelihoods stress experienced by the people of PVTGs lead to the poor health outcomes.
- Their remoteness and scattered settlements make it difficult for them to consolidate and mobilise on the one hand and on the other hand makes it difficult for the state agencies to reach out to them.
- The state agencies to reach out to them. Their very small numbers make them swamped in a large dominant neighboring community and this combined with their poor education, exposure and savvy and reduce any possibility of their navigating to improve the public services delivery or to partake of the development process.

7. Cultural identity or false consciousness?

From 2013 the strategy adopted for the upliftment of the people of the PVTGs as adopted by the Government is to work through the CCD. The term conservation refers to conserving both the populations as well as the cultural identity of the people of the PVTGs. The purist conservation view is that the way of life evolved by the people of PVTGs over centuries captures rich and valuable heritage of the community and contributes to the cultural diversity of the country. It merits conservation. Unless specific targeted efforts are made to conserve the cultural identity of a people of the PVTGs, they would lose their cultural moorings and become lost and disoriented in an unfamiliar and possibly hostile social milieu. Arguments explaining and elaborating on this



Glimpses of Baiga culture reflected in art, crafts and jewels from Mandla and Umariya districts.

view have been accepted and been guiding policies about the people of the PVTGs; often creating physical spaces within which the people could live among themselves shielded from the incursions of a rapacious external society intent on the preying on the innocent and un-spoilt people.

There is a contrarian view which argues that culture being a living thing changes with the times. Any permanent attachment to a specific form of culture is thus creating a false consciousness. Any attempt to keep the people of the PVTGs in isolation will only radically widen the disparity in their living standards and wellbeing vis a vis the rest of the society, making them more and more dependent. Given the often demonstrated inability of the State to effectively protect their habitat and resource base; such isolation will only increase their miseries. An extreme version of this view is a charge that any attempt to preserve the cultural identity of the people of PVTGs is like treating them as exhibits in a live museum. This is accompanied by a strong condemnation of the tendency to treat human beings as exhibits of a museum illustrating a way of life of a bygone era or an era that should be considered as past. This contrarian view eloquently expressed by a senior officer to us also held that other than the value as a quaint relic of the way of living in a distant past, the artifacts and practices of the cultural identity of a people serve only as a tool to perpetuate their isolation at the hands of the dominant communities.

The view, therefore, suggests that there is nothing inherently abhorrent about a people changing their dress habits, their food, pattern of their homes and settlements, their living styles etc. with time and with the level of material well being. (the quaint dresses and behavior patterns can always be presented during festivals and occasions of cultural celebration).

This view therefore argues for the empowerment of the people of the PVTGs to enable them to participate in the development process as equals. In effect, this view underplays the need and value of the conservation dimension but would like to focus on the development of the people of the PVTGs.

The difference between these two views and hence between the approaches of engaging with the people of PVTGs they recommend are clearly seen as originating in belief and value system of the proponents of the views. The CCD plan approach has tried to strike a balance between the two. The issue comes in sharp focus when there is a question of allocating scarce resources.

8. Towards an approach for the wellbeing of the people of the PVTGs

The hard steps needed for the wellbeing of the PVTGs are quite easy to surmise from the situational analysis touched upon in earlier section. There is a need to take steps to improve education, health and livelihoods of the PVTGs. Education status can be enhanced by reducing drop out and transition rates at the upper primary and high school levels.

The support is needed in the form of:

(a) Multi-lingual education of the PVTGs which will help children transit from the dialect they speak at home to using the formal state language used in schools

(b) Providing community based after school support to children so that the burden of illiteracy of parents does not weigh heavy on their delicate shoulders

(c) Reservation of seats for the PVTGs in hostels run by the Government at higher standards

(e) Higher fidelity in implementation of scholarships and employment programmes meant for the PVTGs

Health status can be improved by specific and community-focused efforts to control preventable illnesses such as malaria, water-borne infections and also to boost efforts at improving nutrition status of the population. Livelihood conditions can be improved by creating a plethora of appropriate water harvesting structures, creating diversion based irrigation structures, encouraging “default organic” brand creation and marketing of products as organic, institution of a programme for creation of bio-diversity guides and taking steps towards promotion of eco-tourism. These solutions are known.

The issue is to figure out why do they not come about or get implemented. The contention here is that for such solutions to come about, the focal community needs capacity to negotiate with the



Settlements provided for Sahariya tribals by Government

State and the State needs sensitivity to work for the PVTGs. There are problems at both the ends. It is towards enhancing the chances of such schemes actually working for the benefit of the PVTGs that the following approach is being discussed.

The premise of the recommended approach can be summed up as below:

- The field forces driving the social dynamic which causes the underdevelopment of the people of PVTGs are natural and it is naïve to expect that they will stop influencing outcomes of the efforts for their well being.
- Dominant communities with greater influence over implementation structures therefore will turn the schemes for the benefit of the PVTGs to their advantage. This is most apt to happen with schemes of infrastructure development type.
- Current implementation mechanism does not provide for sharp and transparent targeting or easy way of verifying outputs and outcomes.
- Absence of complete and updated individual and geo-spatial information about the people of PVTGs , has made it difficult to ensure positive transformation in the life of the people of the PVTGs.
- The effective approach of efforts to enhance the level of well being of the PVTGs should be directed towards ensuring that the people of the PVTGs participate in the development process as equal citizens. The development of the people of the PVTGs cannot be held hostage to an externally

imposed isolation to conserve their unique way of life and cultural heritage.

It is suggested that while infrastructure-oriented schemes are easy to conceive and fund and help report quick funds utilisation, their impact in terms of improvement of quality of life of the PVTGs is negligible both due to the possibility of their being used by the dominant community and because of the issues in continued maintenance. The fundamental point is that the underdevelopment of the PVTGs is an outcome of a social process of isolation and subjugation and infrastructure oriented schemes cannot impact this process. It is suggested that technology may be harnessed for the purpose of sharper targeting, effective outreach and easy monitoring of the development schemes meant for the PVTGs.

It is therefore recommended that



CCD funds should not be used to substitute State funding for implementation of the infrastructural schemes formulated by the State but should be treated as being incremental to them.



Using a digital platform, information on each household of the PVTGs should be collected and coded and used for frequent periodic monitoring of the reach of public services and experienced development deficit.



The state should ensure that there is a digital device and a trained user in each habitation of the PVTGs from where such information can be tracked.



To the extent possible, the entire budget of the CCD should be used for direct individual benefits for improvement of health, nutrition, education and employment with minimal inclusion of the essential infrastructural matters.



Digitally enabled dedicated staff needs to become an integral part of the ground level implementation structures. Their performance indicators should relate to observable outcomes of the schemes rather than process indicators.

9. Annexures

Annexure - 1: Ranking of the PVTGs Population in Different States (2001 census)

SI. NO.	State	No. of PVTGs	Population 2001 Census	Ranking Population - wise
1	Chattisgarh + MP	08	7,85,720	1
2	Maharashtra	03	4,08,668	2
3	Jharkhand	09	3,87,358	3
4	Andhra Pradesh	12	3,34,144	4
5	Tamil Nadu	06	2,17,937	5
6	Tripura	01	1,65,103	6
7	Gujarat	05	1,06,775	7
8	West Bengal	03	85,983	8
9	Rajasthan	01	76,237	9
10	Odisha	13	68,745	10
11	Uttarakhand	02	47,288	11
12	Karnataka	02	45,899	12
13	Kerala	05	20,186	13
14	Bihar	09	10,873	14
15	Uttar Pradesh	02	5,365	15
16	Manipur	01	1,225	16
17	Andaman & Nicobar	05	816	17
	Total	87	27,86,322*	

<https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/NACRecommendationsforPVTGs.pdf>

Annexure - 2: PVTGs With More Than 50,000 Population (2001 Census)

SI. NO.	PVTGs	Population
1	Konda Reddis (Andhra Pradesh)	83,096
2	Dongaria Khond (Andhra Pradesh)	85,324
3	Saharia (Rajasthan)	76,237
4	Lodha (West Bengal)	84,966
	Total	3,29,623

<https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/NACRecommendationsforPVTGs.pdf>

Annexure - 3: PVTGs with less than 1000 Population in Different States (2001 Census)

SI. NO.	PVTGs	Population
1	Birjia (Bihar)	17
2	Sentinelests	39
3	Great Andamanese	43
4	Onge	96
5	Birhor (Madhya Pradesh)	143
6	Asur (Bihar)	181
7	Mankidias (Orissa)	205
8	Jarawa	240
9	Cholanaicken (Kerala)	326
10	Shompen	398
11	Birhor (Bihar)	406
12	Savar (Bihar)	420
13	Raji (Uttarakhand)	517
14	Sauria Paharia (Bihar)	585
15	Birhor (Odisha)	702
16	Korwa (Bihar)	703
17	Todas (Tamil Nadu)	875
18	Kota (Tamil Nadu)	925
19	Raji (Uttar Pradesh)	998
	Total	7819

<https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/NACRecommendationsforPVTGs.pdf>

Annexure - 4: PVTGs With More Than One Lakh Population (2001 Census)

SI. NO.	PVTGs	Population
1	Saharias both in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh	4,50,217
2	Baigas in Madhya pradesh/Chattisgarh	3,32,936
3	Katkarias/kathodis in Maharashtra	2,35,022
4	Kolam in Maharashtra	1,73,646
5	Riang (Tripura)	1,65,103
6	Hill Kharia (Jharkhand)	1,64,022
7	Irulas in Tamil Nadu	1,55,606
8	Mal Paharia (Jharkhand)	1,15,093
	Total	1,79,1645

<https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/NACRecommendationsforPVTGs.pdf>

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